Transcription

by

Ernest Bryan

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From Immigrant to Citizen

BY

Ruth Meyer

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Written about Hedwig Haase Meyer
by her granddaughter
Ruth Meyer (Linton)

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By - Ruth E. Meyer

Two girls ascend the steps leading to the upper part of a double house. They ring the bell and walk in. They start to climb the inside stairs. Soon the upstairs door opens. "Hello Mutter", the children say. (This is the name the girls have for their grandmother) "Oh, Hello children," answers the grandmother, a stout woman of average height, who, at seventy-two, has hardly a wrinkle in her face, or much grey hair, ~~answers~~ "so for once you came." The girls walk in; put their wraps on the bed, and go into the living room. They talk with the grandmother, and tell her all the news

After about an hour's visit they say they must leave. "Already," the grandmother says, "Do you always have to be in such a rush." ¶ "But Mudder," the girls say, "this is Wednesday and you have to go to your Sewing Meeting this afternoon." ¶ For thirty nine years, the grandmother has gone to Lutheran Hospital every Wednesday with about eleven other ladies to sew quilts. The money they get for these quilts is given to the Hospital. "Oh yes that's right," she says. "Tell your Mother that I'll write to her this week." ¶ The girls put on their wraps. "Well, goodbye," they say. They walk down the steps and are gone. The grandmother puts on

Do you know how to paragraph conversation?

her hat and coat and goes to her sewing meeting. This is the life that this woman, Hedwig Meyer, leads today. A visit once in a while from her children; the rest of the time she is alone to do as she pleases. She goes to church, to Sewing Meeting, to the Ladies Aid, and to visit her friends.

Now let us look into the early life of Hedwig Meyer. In a small town near Dresden, Saxony, Germany, a daughter, Hedwig was born to Theodore Krause, and his wife Laura on April 4th, 1866. The father owned a dye plant, and he built his home near it. In this home Hedwig spent her first fifteen years. These years were very pleasant, as the parents were very good to

Hedwig and her sisters, Laura, Anna, and Ida and her brother, Theodore. It was around this home that the children played when they were very young. However, life was very much different then for a young miss than it is now, and from little on each girl had to make her own clothes. Never were the girls idle. Nights at night after the school work was done, the girls sat in their places and knitted stockings, or sewed underskirts. At the age of six, Hedwig was sent to the first Buergueschule (public school) as were the other children. Early each morning they all trotted off to school, books in one hand, and lunch in the other. During the eight years at school, Hedwig was taught anatomy, botany, reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, gymnastics, and many

other subjects. When Hedwig was fourteen she left school and began to support herself by taking care of children of wealthy families. Each day, she dressed them, fed them, took them for a walk, and taught them until they were old enough to go to school.

In 1878, Hedwig's brother and a sister went to America. After they were gone, Hedwig began to ~~get~~ grow restless as the young always do. "Mother," she said one day, "I think I'll go to America, and see what it's like. I can come back in two years with brother and sister." The mother and father disliked the idea for awhile, and finally consented to let their fifteen year old daughter go to America. Accordingly on June 10th, 18 Hedwig set sail from Germany. Little did she think that she would never see her parents or her fatherland

again. Coming over, Hedwig traveled second from the lowest class. On her way over she happened to go down to the place where the lowest class was lodged. Here Hedwig saw a large mass of people huddled together in filth. All were hungry, and when Hedwig gave them some of the food she had, they almost injured her in the rush to get it. After this incident, she did not go down into that section again, but she never forgot that group of people huddled together in the dark. On June 16th, her boat, it's = it is The Vandalia, lost its steering wheel and they were lost for fifteen days. Fourteen ships were sent out to search for them. On the fifteenth day, they were surrounded at a distance by eight ships. A prize was offered to the first one that reached the ship, there was quite a race. The English ship, Express and the Scotish ship,

Glascow got there first. The two ships took the Vandalia between them and towed her into the drydocks at Glascow where the ship was repaired. They stayed in Scotland six days, and then set out for America. On August 1st, 1851, Hedwig got her first glimpse of the land that was to be her home for the rest of her life.

Hedwig landed in New York City and went from there to Cleveland where she has lived ever since. There she did housework for the people who had paid her passage to America. She earned $.75 a week, but this the lady kept to help pay for her passage. Those first years in America were extremely hard for Hedwig. Many of the girls around her were going to high school, but she had to work. However Hedwig soon saw that everyone had a fairly even chance to get ahead if they

I wonder if she got mad → got sick + had to stay 75 ¢ + the rest went to pay for the passage + probably never forgave him for this

wanted to. She saw workingmen
all around her owning their own home
a thing that was very hard to do in
Germany. Many things were availab
to the common people of America,
that most of the Germans did
not even know about at that time.
One thing was the tomato. Hedwig
says, in describing the first time she
had ever tasted a tomato, "I bit
into my first tomato, thinking
it would be sweet by the looks of
it, but how quick I got it out of
my mouth again." All things,
however, have not had the same
effect on her that the tomato had.
One thing that has had just the opposite
effect is ice cream. This is one dish
she never tires of. This is true of
almost all native Germans as they
can only obtain ices in Germany
and ice cream is something new

for them.

Hedwig ~~only~~ spent only three years as a single girl in America. She met Henry Myers, and in 1884 she married him. By marrying Henry, according to the laws at that time, Hedwig automatically became an American citizen as Henry was American born. They didn't have much money but they thought they could get along. The young couple moved into a two room apartment. They did not have running water and electric lights as their common as young couples of a later date were to have; instead, they had well and cistern water and coal oil lamps. Despite the inconveniences, Hedwig and Henry were happy. Henry worked in a grocery store, where he earned twelve dollars a week. However, twelve dollars bought quite a bit, and so

the young couple managed for
four years to get along and save
some money besides. On March
29th, 1887 that time came for
which the husband and wife had
looked forward to with such joy. On that
day their first child, Laura Martha
was born. When Laura was expected
Hedwig and Henry decided that they
would need more room, and
moved from the small place to
six rooms. On Oct 10th, 1890 the
first son, Theodore William was
born. Henry decided that he was
not making enough money to
support a growing family, and
so he gave up his job and started
in the trucking business. In 1890
he began trucking for the Cleveland
Burial Case Co. Here he worked
for the next eighteen years at

~~Until~~ until the company left the city.
The same year that Henry had
taken his new job, the couple upon
finding that they had enough money
saved, bought an eight room
house. In 1892 a second daughter
Catherine was born. It seemed
that the Lord had not willed that
Hedwig should have her daughters
very long. For in 1894, He took
the two girls from their earthly
home. In June of that year,
a ~~Dr~~ Disease and Scarlet Fever
epidemic broke out in the city.
The baby took sick with the measles
on June 12th and three days later she died. Laura
missed her little sister a great
deal. When she was late in getting
home from school, Hedwig always
knew that she had gone to visit Katy's
grave. In September of the same

year Laura came down with
Scarlet Fever, and in three days
she had been called Home to God.
She had been the victim
of that dreadful disease which
thanks to scientists, has been
pretty well overcome. Only a
mother who has lost a child
knows what Hedwig went through
in the months that followed.
Henry at that time was delivering
coffins at night because so many
were needed. When he got through
he would bring the remaining ones
home and put them in the hall until
the next morning. He had to wait
until Hedwig was in bed each night
before he did this, as she could
not bear to see the coffins.

Hedwig did not let this loss
take all her desire to live from the

as another might have done. She knew that she had a duty to her husband and to her one remaining child. Hedwig and Henry soon realized that if anything ever happened to them, Teddy would not have any sisters to look after him. Accordingly Hedwig set about teaching Teddy the value of money and how to buy things. At first the five year old boy trotted beside his Mother each market day, but it wasn't long before Hedwig was sending him alone to purchase things for her. It must have been something to see this small boy strolling down the street with his basket and money in his hand and the items to be purchased in his head. How different is the boy

of six or seven today. If she wants anything he asks for the money or else charges it at the corner grocery store. His mother rarely asks him to go to the store for her, for whenever she needs anything she gets into her car or calls up for it.

As all boys do, this boy grew up. When he was sixteen, he got his first job as a mail boy for the New York Central Railroad. Gradually he worked his way up until in 1927 he was made Auditor of Local Freight Accounts and in 1937 Assistant Auditor of General Freight Accounts for the N. Y. C. R. R. When Teddy was about eighteen or nineteen he began going with Martha Helms. In 1940 when Teddy was 22, he thought he was old enough to take on the responsibilities

of a wife. Thus on November 23rd, 1910 Martha Helms became Mrs. P. H. Meyer. Hedwig and Henry had bought a house a short way down the street from their own, and into this house the young couple moved.

Life took on a new outlook for Hedwig when, on March 29th, 1912, a grandson, christened Robert Henry, presented himself to the family. He was doubly dear to Hedwig, first because he was the first grandchild and second because he was born on the same day that Hedwig's Laura had been born, and it was as if God had given her child back to her. Living so close, naturally, Robert spent much of his time with Hedwig. She taught him German songs and verses and

his parents taught him English living in such an adult atmosphere it was only natural that he developed faster mentally than most boys of his age. However, after he got out with boys of his own age, and found playmates he spent less time with the parents and grandparents and developed into a normal boy.

In 1916 Hedwig and Henry bought a small farm in Brunswick, Ohio. Not long after they moved out there, Henry had a stroke, and was unable to do very much. The work of the farm fell on Hedwig, and she did her best to take care of it but it soon became too much for her and in 1918 they sold the farm and bought a two family house in Cleveland. Henry partially recovered, and went to work for the Shaffman

Maccaroni Co. Four years afterwards
he had the second stroke which
left him an invalid until his
death on April 10th, 1932. Through
all these years, Hedwig gave up
all her activities, except her sewing
meeting which she did not miss
until Henry became almost
helpless and gave all her time
to caring for him. Sometimes
Henry got well enough to walk
around. Many times he got
enough strength to work around
the yard and fix things, but
always after a few months or
a year he would get another spell
and be left pretty helpless. About
had
1929 he got his third stroke. This
left him helpless. Hedwig had to
feed him and dress him and
lift him around. Every morning

she lifted him from his bed to a chair and pulled him into the living room or onto the porch. For a man who had always been unusually strong, this helplessness was tragic. Often when Hedwig would go down to wash she would say to Henry "Now Henry I'm going down to wash a few things. I'll only be gone a short time so you stay right where you are." "Yes I will," he'd answer, but when she returned he'd usually be sprawled on the floor after an unsuccessful attempt to walk. This was very heartbreaking for him, and very hard for Hedwig. She then had to lift this heavy man onto a chair. This was anything but easy for a woman who was as stout as Hedwig. In fact it would have been very hard for anyone to do. What Hedwig

went through those three years before Henry's death only she knows. Henry's death was a God send for her, as she could not have stood the terrible strain many more years.

On July 18th, 1920, Hedwig's first granddaughter was born and christened Ruth Esther. During Ruth's growing years, Hedwig was busy with Henry, and then to she lived quite a distance away, so she did not spend as much time with Ruth or her sister, Lenore, who had been born on July 28, 1922, as she had with Robert.

In 1923 Teddy, Martha and the three children moved to Lakewood, a suburb of Cleveland, and a distance of about five miles from Hedwig's home. This meant

that she ~~got to~~ was like to see less and less of them, for at that time autos were not very common, and the street car was the usual means of transportation. It wasn't very easy to get two small girls and a boy ready to go away. The return trip was the hardest for Martha and Ted usually had to get off the street car, each carrying a sleeping child and trying to keep track of a sleepy boy.

When Henry died it seemed as if Nedwig's life began all over again. She now had plenty of time to herself to do the things she had always wanted to do but never seemed to have the time for. She resumed old contacts which she had found it necessary to drop when Henry was so ill.

She got to see more movies, and attend more picnics and parties.

During all her years in America Hedwig has purchased or borrowed many books and read them and in this way has educated herself. She has read many of her books over and over, and is now slowly passing them on to others that they too may read and enjoy them as she did.

Hedwig has always had a passion for making quilts both embroidered and patchwork, and for doing other kinds of fancy work. Many of the stitches she learned when just a small girl in Germany, but she has never forgotten them. She embroidered

bedspreads for each grandchild's bed, and for the girls' twin beds when they got older. In recent years she has made many quilts. If you visit her son's home you will probably see a quilt or a comforter that she has made. (Provided you look under the bedspreads) Many of her best quilts are packed away in her chest to be given away at a later time. One of her latest quilts, and one of the best, is a quilt portraying different scenes of the Bible from the beginning of man to the Crucifixion of Christ. This is done on a white background and embroidered with yellow floss. In spite of her seventy two years, Hedwig is still active mentally and physically. She gets around easier

and does more things than
many women twenty years
younger, do.

Hedwig likes things that
are nice and things that are up-
to-date. In several homes she
noticed that the latest thing in
kitchen colors was red and
cream, so she promptly set
to work, and painted her whole
kitchen, walls, furniture and
all, cream and touched it with
red. Then she bought curtains
to match. She did this all
last year at the age of seventy-one.

Hedwig has always liked to
travel, and as the opportunity
to do so did not always present
itself, she traveled in mind
rather than body. In recent
years, however, she has been able

to do more actual traveling. In 1934 she and her granddaughter Ruth went to the World's Fair in Chicago. Ruth had been there several times before so she knew her way around pretty well. From early until late they walked. When they got tired, they rested. It was surprising the way Hedwig got around and the enthusiasm she had for seeing things. In 1935 she took a twelve hour automobile trip to Endicott, N. Y. where her grandson, Robert was going to school. Endicott is a small town in between the mountains in southern New York. It is in this town that the Endicott-Johnston Shoe Co. has one of its main factories. The

International Business Machine Co. also has its factory and laboratory here. It is a model town that has no labor trouble because the employees are kept satisfied with model homes, recreational facilities, and medical care. This is evidenced in all facets of the city.

In June of 1937, Hedwig's son and his family with the exception of Robert who had unmarried in 1938, moved to Detroit, Michigan. Hedwig was now left more alone than ever. Robert and his wife, Doris came to see her once in awhile but other activities kept them from coming as often as she wanted them to. Teddy and his family came about

once a month or less frequently already Hedwig has made two trips to Detroit to visit her children, and is planning a third trip for Ruth's graduation in June, 1938. Her life now from day to day is pretty much the same but she is content to live so.

Hedwig has never regretted that she came to the U.S.A. She realizes that the Germany of today is different than it used to be. She says, "Germany as I knew it was a peace-loving one. In sickness and in happiness we clung together. Since the World War, the presence of all the foreign nations in Germany has bred nothing but discontent, disorder, and

hate." Hedwig says that the letters she received are not as free as they used to be. This is due to the rigid censorship which takes place in that country. She believes that if the newspapers would not stir up the people against other nations there would be more peace, but the newspapers with the constant propoganda are always spreading trouble. Hedwig ends as I will end "Would that the Lord would grant peace on earth and goodwill among men."

You have made Hedwig a very real and very lovable character.

B+